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ABSTRACT

Responding to declines in the percentages of minorities enrolled in college, 24 educational leaders from around the country met to discuss their campus race relations problems and to formulate a statement on their findings. This document reproduces that statement. The signers see three national imperatives: (1) a moral imperative to make a new commitment to equal access to education; (2) an economic imperative of economic progress dependent on the national ability to educate the work force; and (3) a political imperative that the viability of a free democracy depends on a fully educated and participating citizenry. They also recommend that educational leaders allocate funds in such a way as to increase diversity on campuses, value diversity, overcome racism and ethnocentrism, work to increase retention of economically disadvantaged students, enhance employment opportunities within the university for minorities, invest in and prepare the next generation of teachers in a way that reflects the new inclusiveness, and establish stronger partnerships with two-year and community colleges. The text includes a list of signers and their affiliations. (JB)

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RACE RELATIONS ON AMERICAN COLLEGE CAMPUSES

The Need for a Higher Level of Inclusiveness

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Race Relations on American College Campuses:

The Need for a Higher Level of Inclusiveness

Foreword

April 11, 1990

At about the same time that the statement which follows was being prepared, press reports based on new U.S. Department of Education figures appeared showing that minority enrollment in colleges had reached "historic highs." With more minorities in college than ever before, why then issue an urgent appeal for a "higher level of inclusiveness"? Why not conclude that the task is being effectively addressed?

The reason is that these reports fail to take into account the current surge in minority population. When these demographic changes are compared with the small gains in minority enrollment in recent years a much different picture emerges.

As a recent report from the American Council on Education shows, enrollment of minorities in college is actually on the decline. Only 25% of the nation's African American males aged 18 to 24 enrolled in 1988, compared with 35% in 1976. Only 32% of Hispanic males the same age enrolled, compared with nearly 40% in 1976. The percentage of women in both ethnic groups who enrolled was also smaller, although the decline was less dramatic.

The nation's racial composition is changing rapidly. The minority population is increasing relative to the white population at the rate of almost a percentage point a year. The truth is, the nation is failing to come to grips with this reality in its schools and colleges.

The Educational Leadership Program invited 24 educational leaders from around the country to a four-day meeting at the end of March 1990 to discuss their race relations problems on campus and to formulate a statement on their findings. Most of the participants had previously taken part in one of ELP's Christian A. Johnson Leadership Seminars. The meeting was jointly sponsored with the Ford Foundation. What is striking about their statement is the degree to which it suggests that campus racial tensions today are the result of failures across the entire educational spectrum. Unfortunately these failures are fueled by the sense of complacency we derive from statistics showing that we are overcoming racial imbalances. In fact, we are not.

Nicholas Farnham, Director
Educational Leadership Program

RACE RELATIONS ON AMERICAN COLLEGE CAMPUSES:
THE NEED FOR A HIGHER LEVEL OF INCLUSIVENESS

The ideals of our nation, as reflected in the Constitution, unite powerfully today with new demographic and economic realities to require that educational leaders speak out on the nation's failure to make its schools and colleges places that attract and retain the full range of ethnic, social and economic groups in our population.

We see three interdependent national imperatives in this regard:

1. Moral -- Educational leaders must help the nation to make a new, forceful commitment to educational justice that reflects our commitment to freedom and equality for all persons. Every American is born with a right to genuine access to an empowering education.
2. Economic -- Economic progress -- and indeed the individual economic success of every American -- is absolutely dependent on the degree to which we are able to educate all of our people to new, higher levels of attainment.
3. Political -- The viability of this nation as a free democracy depends on a fully educated and participating citizenry.

The nation's minorities, i.e., its people of color, will be the majority by the end of the first half of the 21st Century -- the majority in its classrooms, its

workforce, and the majority in its polling booths.

We are deeply concerned that this reality is not being addressed in the nation's schools and colleges. For the most part, educational institutions have yet to come to grips with the new cultural diversity in a manner consistent with our nation's founding principles and economic interests. The problem is acutely evident in our primary and secondary schools. In higher education, the continued decline in the proportion of minorities seeking a college education, the poor retention rate of those in college, combined with evidence of racial tension and a number of recent incidents involving racial violence on campuses are also disturbing signs of this failure.

Although many colleges and universities are working to establish priorities and programs for economically deprived minorities on their campuses, the level and reach of these efforts have so far fallen significantly short of what needs to be done. There are limitations on what educational institutions can do alone. But college leaders must have the vision and courage both to alert the public to the dangers ahead and to move their own campuses toward a higher level of inclusiveness.

All college campuses should be places that attract, affirm and enable through education students from all parts of the changing American population.

In working toward such a full concept of inclusiveness, college leaders must be willing to encourage and join with leaders in the public and private sectors in raising the entire educational process to the top of the national agenda. Inclusiveness at the college level cannot be achieved without dramatic

improvements at the elementary and secondary levels. The nation's investment in schooling must be increased to the point where every student is assured the opportunity to become qualified for college. College leaders must help through programs that boost the aspirations of students and that increase the performance of teachers. Leaders in higher education have an obligation to encourage community involvement in school problems. At the same time, they must dedicate themselves to making the case to the public for increasing our national interest in schooling. Any "peace dividend" must not be dissipated.

There is much that can and needs to be done on our college campuses now, without waiting for further changes in local, state and national policy. Accordingly we make the following recommendations to our fellow educational leaders:

1. Presidents and trustees should make sure that within current college budgets, an increased priority is given to diversity. Funds must be re-allocated to programs that will both improve the performance of underprepared minorities and help to build respect for cultural diversity. Financial aid policies must be made as sensitive as possible to the needs of economically disadvantaged students.

2. Administrators must ensure that, in moving toward a sense of full inclusiveness, colleges and universities increasingly become communities in which trustees, administrators, and faculty alike can value, learn from, and celebrate diversity. Presidents should take steps to sensitize trustees, alumni and donors to the economic

and moral issues raised. Faculty must be encouraged to see the intellectual value of creating programs that build respect for cultural diversity. Students need to be offered social and academic opportunities to celebrate and examine the richness of our nation's ethnic and cultural background.

3. Racism and ethnocentrism must be overcome. Presidents, administrators and faculty must exhibit the courage and will to condemn acts that violate personal rights. Programs must be instituted that sensitize students, faculty and staff to the ease of unintentionally overstepping the boundaries of civility in a culturally diverse environment. Most importantly, leaders on college campuses must exemplify a personal standard of inclusiveness that reaches out to minority students as full and equal members of an authentic campus community.

4. Programs to improve recruitment of economically disadvantaged students must be matched by efforts to increase their retention in college and their continuation in graduate school. College must not be a revolving door for minorities. Without a significant increase in the numbers of minority students obtaining degrees, there will be insufficient numbers going into the teaching and other professions to serve as role models for others.

5. Educational leaders must enhance employment opportunities for people of color in the campus community and work toward

creating diversity within their faculty and staffs, thereby opening leadership positions throughout the academy.

6. Higher education institutions must invest in and prepare the next generation of school teachers and administrators in a manner that reflects the new inclusiveness. Administrators must find incentives and faculty must develop new pedagogical tools that will bring more minorities into the teaching profession.

7. Because minority students are mainly enrolled in two-year community colleges, four-year colleges ought to establish stronger partnerships with junior and community colleges. Partnerships and creative alliances among all types of institutions can be fruitful and encourage diversity.

We must have confidence that ultimately the cost of whatever we do toward improving educational justice in our nation will reap benefits beyond our calculation. Surely the time to begin these changes is now; in fact now is hardly soon enough.

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